9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

They went after him and found he was Heavenly Colt. He was alive and in good condition. Heavenly Colt was returned to his rightful Blood owner. That horse had great secret power.

Like humans, horses were believed to survive death as spirits possessing the power to return and make their spirit presences known to the living. Weasel Tail illustrated his own strong belief in horse spirits by relating a personal experience.

About 50 years ago I visited the lodge of Steel, a Blood Indian. I knew Steel thought his father's spirit was near him at all times. I asked Steel, "Where is your father, Many Spotted Horses?" While I talked I heard a horse whinny far away. Then I heard a horse at the back of the lodge shaking and its stirrups rattling. Then I heard someone talking behind Steel. I could see no one there. It was Steel's father's spirit, come to visit him on his spirit horse."

BELIEFS REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF HORSES

The beliefs of the great majority of aged, fullblood Blackfoot Indians regarding the origin of horses are embodied in their mythology. In the course of my field work on the Blackfeet Reservation, Mont., elderly Piegan informants recited three different myths explaining the origin of horses. One was told by Short Face, recognized by his fellows as the most accomplished storyteller on the reservation, in the fall of 1943. In the summer of 1947, my interpreters, Reuben and Cecile Black Boy, said that during the intervening years Dog Child, a North Piegan, had told them another version of this myth.

Short Face's version, which I have given a title to, follows.

THUNDER'S GIFT OF HORSES

Many years ago, when people used dogs for moving camp, there lived a Piegan named Wise Man. He and his wife were a handsome couple, but they wore very plain buckskin clothes. One day Wise Man said to his wife, "I have been thinking about something. If my plans work out we shall have very fine clothes. Let's move away from here and make camp in the woods. I'll collect all the wood you need, but you must not break any of the sticks I bring in."

Wise Man and his wife moved to the woods. After he had brought in wood, he told his wife, "Now I shall go up the hill and catch some eagles." He ascended the hill, dug a pit, found a dead coyote and cut it open, placed a roof of sticks over the pit after he had climbed into it, and tied the coyote on the roof. When eagles saw the coyote they swooped down and began pecking at the carcass. Wise Man grabbed each eagle in turn as it ate, pulled it into the pit and wrung its neck. He caught eight eagles. Then he returned to camp and told his wife, "I shall make myself a bonnet from these feathers." He made his bonnet—

[115]

[111]

[14] Wilson (1924, pp. 144–145) reported Hidatsa belief that all horses had supernatural powers, and that if horses were not properly cared for they would not increase in numbers and might leave their negligent owners. A Hidatsa informant also claimed the Assiniboin considered their horses sacred and sang sacred songs to them (ibid., p. 142). Dorsey (1894, p. 499) mentioned the Dakota custom of praying to horses. The existence of their horse medicine cults is evidence of belief in the supernatural powers of horses among other Plains and Plateau tribes.

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Plenty of Buffalo Meat
(Told by Many-Tail-Feathers)

224 TO DECOY AND SUDDENLY PUT TO DEATH a herd of buffalo, that is just what the prehistoric, nomadic, Indian tribes of our northwestern and Canada's western plains did whenever meat and hides were needed. [175] And they continued that activity into historic time, even up to a period definitely determined to have been somewhere around 1843–171 46. The Blackfoot, Crow, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, and Kalispel In-[123] dian tribes all did it; but I shall tell only of the four Blackfoot tribes' [787] way of it, as I have been an active member of them for sixty-three [828] years and have heard their stories of it all many, many times. The Blackfoot belief that dreams are actual experiences of their shadows [774] (souls) while their bodies sleep, and that Sun is the supreme god of [776] earth and sky, enters into it all.

101 To begin with, there are four tribes of the Blackfoot Indian Con-619 federacy: the Blackfoot, Blood, and North Piegan tribes of Alberta, 515 and the Pikuni tribe of the Blackfoot Reservation, Montana. Of [787] all the story tellers (historians) of the four tribes, I considered Many-Tail-Feathers of the Montana tribe best of all. He died in 1925 in his ninetieth year, and it was his father, also named Many-Tail-Feathers, who, because of his powerful dream, put an end to the decoying and slaughtering of buffalo herds by the four tribes. And so to my old friend's tale of it all, as follows:

173 In that very-far-back time our ancestors were but one large tribe, 224 the Blackfeet. It was not easy for the hunters to obtain meat and

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

angrily talking, saying that the fire-setter should be made to suffer. 787

My father sat down upon his couch, put on his leggings and moccasins. 224 My mother, building up the fire, asked what he would eat: pemmican, broiled ribs, berry soup, or what?

"Nothing. Nothing at all," he almost whispered, lay down, turning his back to us. And sadly, worriedly, we looked at him, and obeying my mother's signs to us went outside and sat at one side of the doorway of the lodge. Foodless, silent, long we sat there. From afar the people stared at us, came not near us. We were very sad.

Sun was near the middle of the blue when my father came out to us. He had not washed, rebraided his hair, nor painted his face with [302] sacred red. Very poor looking he was. "I am going to Lone Walker's [822] lodge to tell of my vision; you better come; sit outside," he said to us. We got up and followed him, sat down close outside the lodge where we could hear all that would be said within.

After a few words with my father, Lone Walker came out and shouted to this and that one of our chiefs and Sun's men to come to him. They soon entered the lodge, and a big crowd of our people surrounded it, also sat down to listen.

Then soon my father began, loudly speaking: "My friends, my [774] vision was powerful. As I slept I, my shadow, went forth upon dis- [513] covery of whatever I might see. It was that, as I was walking in a valley strange to me, a buffalo bull came out from a grove, came toward me, stopped and raised high a right forefoot, making as it were, the sign for peace. So, peace I also signed, and he came on. Soon we met and he said to me: 'I have been looking for you. It is that I must give you warning about something you and your kind are doing that is very wrong. It is that with your *piskans* you are rapidly killing off us buffalo. If you keep on doing it you will soon put an end to the very last ones of us. So this I say: stop using your *piskans* if you would prevent something dreadful happening to all of your kind.'

" 'What would it be, that dreadful thing?' I asked.

" 'I have warned you; I will say no more,' he answered and turned and walked back the way he had come. With that I awoke, my body wet with sweat. I felt that I must at once prove to my vision buffalo

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

White Man to elevate the Blackfoot Indian even unto the artful employment of profanity and imprecation. And even when a Blackfoot is cussing a veritable English blue streak, chances are that he does not, even today, understand the traditional implications of the *náh-pi-quon* phrases he is using; more than likely he believes that he is employing terms of strong emphasis, nothing more. 195 177

About the worst thing you can call someone in Blackfoot is *i-mi-dés-ki* (dog face), and since this is a term the Blackfoots formerly used in reference to the White soldier (because of his moustache?), Blackfoot may well be the origin of that term as now universally applied to the American infantryman. [578]

The only home-grown expletive I have ever heard the Chief use is, *"I-mi-táu-chi-kahn!"*—a word which he employs with purely humorous connotation and which could perhaps best be translated as referring to the vernacular portion of a dog. 195

I told the Chief about my experiences up on the pine ridge (Jimmy translating) and the Chief considered it all unremarkable enough; however, he could not explain my having smelled cigar smoke. (Cigar is a word that the Blackfoots got from the Whites. The Blackfoot *tsi-kái-yeh* is quite obviously the French *cigarre* expressed in Blackfoot phonemes. Another Blackfoot word for cigar, which Jim usually but not always pronounces, *Bo-tsip-stahk-kan*, translates as "all tobacco.") 122

Jim explained that the Blackfoot word for ghost is *stáh-aw* and that the burial house on the ridge is referred to by the Indians as the "ghost house." The Chief was surprised to learn that someone had made off with Earrings' head, because this is definitely a recent occurrence, but I learned that grave-robbing is nothing new to the Reservation. The traditional Blackfoot method of burial was the scaffold or tree burial (chiefs and men of prominence were sometimes left at rest in a teepee high on some hill or ridge), and the Chief explained the reason that the burial house came into existence among his people. The Blackfoots left the earthly remains of their departed loved-ones wrapped in a robe and tied to a scaffold which was placed either in a tree (usually by a stream or on a bluff above a stream) or atop a cairn of flat stones. The Blackfoots believed that when the body had served its earthly purpose of transporting through life the spirit of an individual, the body should return to the earth and so nourish the earth to the creation of new life (this is certainly a philosophy much more beautiful than the White Man's encasing the dead body in a vault in order to "protect" it from any possibility of its renewing the soil which had given it birth). But the 122 764 [795] 764 [774] [812] [177]